NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD
FIELD STRIPCROPPING
(ACRE)
CODE 586

DEFINITION

Growing crops in a systematic arrangement of strips or bands across the general slope (not on the contour) to reduce water erosion. The crops are arranged so that a strip of grass or close-growing crop is alternated with a row crop or fallow.

PURPOSE

To help control erosion and runoff on sloping cropland where contour stripcropping is not practical.

CONDITION WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On sloping cropland and on certain recreation and wildlife land. This may include providing strips of grasses and legumes to improve wildlife habitat.

WATER QUANTITY

This practice may reduce the volume and rate of surface runoff, by increasing the amount of water which infiltrates into the soil. Base flow in nearby channels may be extended. When the quantity of surface water is reduced, there is a potential for more percolation increasing the quantity of ground water.

WATER QUALITY

This practice may reduce erosion and the delivery of sediment and related substances to the surface waters. The practice may increase infiltration, and when there is sufficient water available, may increase the amount of leachable pollutants moved toward the ground water.

Since this practice is not on the contour there will be areas of concentrated flow, from which detached sediment, adsorbed chemicals and dissolved substances will be delivered more rapidly to the receiving waters. The sod strips will not be efficient filter areas in these areas of concentrated flow.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR WATER QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Quantity

1. Effects on the water budget, especially on volumes and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, transpiration, deep percolation, and ground-water recharge.

2. Variability of practice's effects caused by seasonal weather variations.

3. Potential for a change in plant growth and transpiration because of changes in the volume of soil water.

Quality

1. Filtering effects of vegetation on movement of sediment and dissolved and sediment-attached substances.

2. Effects on erosion and the movement of sediment, pathogens, and soluble and sediment-attached substances carried by runoff.

3. Effects on the visual quality of downstream water resources.

SPECIFICATIONS

1. The width of strips is determined by the number of times the RUSLE length of slope needs to be divided or for Buffer Stripcropping the ratio of cultivated crop strip to perennial sod (buffer) strip.

2. Strip boundaries shall parallel diversions or be laid out across the general slope of the field. Furrow grades may exceed 2 percent for a distance not exceeding 300 feet unless analysis shows a longer reach is acceptable.

3. Grassed waterways, tile, or outlets shall be established and maintained in areas of concentrated flow, which annually cause excessive ephemeral gully erosion.

4. Tillage operations and planting of crops shall be parallel to strip boundaries.

5. When planting sod strips not to be harvested, special consideration will be given to planting a variety of grasses and legumes to increase wildlife value. Mowing of strips shall be delayed until after July 1 to provide cover for ground nesting birds.

6. Refer to Section I, F.O.T.G., for supporting Practice (P) Factor.